Thundercrack Press Release

"An ecstasy so great that all heaven and hell become but one Shangri-la...A land of unbelievable vigor resting upon mountains of flesh we all try to conquer." THUNDERCRACK, a new film directed, photographed, and edited by underground filmmaker Curt McDowell, will be shown Friday April 2, 1976 at the Los Angeles International Film Exposition (FILMEX). The original screenplay, written by George Kuchar, is based on an idea conceived by Director McDowell. THUNDERCRACK is the first major feature-length film produced by Thomas Brothers Film Studio in San Francisco. Starring Marion Eaton, George Kuchar, and the Director's sister, Melinda McDowell. This black and white, 2 and 1/2 hour epic emerges as a new dimension in contemporary filmmaking.

THUNDERCRACK deals with the confinement of 8 characters who are trapped in a farmhouse in Eastern Nebraska while the elements rage outside...raging no less ferociously than the passions that twist these characters into pretzels for the nation's breadbasket.

THUNDERCRACK'S Director, Curt McDowell, has been heralded as one of the West Coast's popular and prolific independent filmmakers. For six years McDowell's audiences have enjoyed the fresh, direct, comedy entertainment he provides in any one of his 30 films. He has had one-man shows at New York's Museum of Modern Art and at Canyon Cinematheque in San Francisco, McDowell shows have become an annual event. In 1974, an unprecedented tribute was paid when he was invited to be the 'Special Guest Filmmaker' at the 12th Ann Arbor Film Festival. And now, THUNDERCRACK is the quintessence of McDowell's cinematic and artistic abilities. The Director's natural enthusiasm for film as well as his consistently encouraging relationship with the cast, crew, and producers stimulated the energetic performances seen in THUNDERCRACK. The only performance that needed no coaxing was that of "Bing", played by George Kuchar.

George Kuchar, a well known independent filmmaker in his own right. added a stellar performance to THUNDERCRACK. Kuchar's knowledge of film made him an attentive and consistent actor. However, oftentimes his scenes would have to be "one-take" because George has a tendency to tear off tablecloths, dishes and all, in order to enhance visual impact and engage his fellow actors. The energy he exuded on the set quickly informed the cast that he was not just that quiet man arranging the lights.

George Kuchar has been making films with his twin brother Nike since the age of twelve, Developing their own "Hollywood in the Bronx", the brothers worked together as a team until several years ago. In the mid-60's George became famous for his solemnly funny parodies of Hollywood movies like "Corruption of the Damned," "Eclipse of the Sun Virgin" and "Color He Shameless". In 1966, George increased his popularity in underground cinema with the autobiographical "Hold Me While I'm Naked." Presently a film teacher at the San Francisco Art Institute, Kuchar instigates the typically torrid plots in his classroom B-Movies, ("The Desperate and the Deep", "Remember Tomorrow").

Now, THUNDERCRACK, an epic of massive impact. Besides writing the screenplay and acting in the film, Kuchar also contributed his lighting ability. An ardent fan of Hollywood lighting techniques, Kuchar gave the THUNDERCRACK footage an essence that would make von Sternberg proud, Many of the dramatic shadows in the film were created by aiming the light through strips of black paper hung from the ceiling or through a ladder.

Like McDowell and Kuchar, each of the remaining three crew members were equally as versatile and talented. This enthusiastic crew of five was one of the reasons that THUNDERCRACK was able to maintain its very Low-Budget.

Por Mark Ellinger, composer of the brilliant THUNDERCRACK score, this was the first time he had written music for film. The finished product is a musical masterpiece in itself. The combination of Ellinger music and McDowell's editing enriches the building excitement of THUNDERCRACK'S mood.

Probably the most enchanting character in THUNDERCRACK is that of Mrs Gert Hammond, the lonely, eccentric widow whose life is lit up by unexpected visitors. Narion Eaton's performance as Mrs. Hammond is impeccable! A stage actress since the age of 13, Miss Eaton has acted in 54 lead roles and innumerable smaller parts. She has worked with the Marin Shakespeare Festival, Jack Aaronson & Company in Sausalito, San Francisco Acting Ensemble, Actor's Workshop & World Stage of San Francisco and she was actress/teacher at the Engler Theatre in Sacramento. Miss Eaton's first film was the Liberty Street Production of SIP THE WINE, 1975. With her role in THUNDERCRACK, Marion Eaton was quickly initiated and educated to the sense of film-acting as opposed to stage-acting. Her custom of maintaining a "character for a two-hour play was somewhat jarred when the Director would say "Cut!". Though dazed at first, Marion promptly adapted to become THUNDERCRACK and Thomas Brothers' most outstanding actress. The essence of Mrs. Hammond's character was revealed to Marion when Mr. Dominic furnished her with a cork-screw hair-do and eyebrows that looked like they were falling off her face.

Coiffure and Make-up by Mr. Dominic can always be attributed to George Kucher.

The advent of THUNDERCRACK unveils the talents and energy of the small group of people who rally under the banner of Thomas Brothers Film Studio in San Francisco. Audiences everywhere may look forward to more THOMAS BROTHERS films in the areas of documentary, experimental, and, of course, dramatic narrative.

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